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HALF-CENTURY SERMON,

BY

REV. CHARLES WELLINGTON, D.D.,

TEMPLETON, MASS.

A

SERMON

IN COMMEMORATION OF

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF

7551.164

THE ORDINATION, FEB. 25th, 1807,

OF

THE AUTHOR, REV. CHARLES WELLINGTON,

AS PASTOR OF THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY
IN TEMPLETON, MASS.

BOSTON:
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NOTE.

THE following Sermon is published neither by request, nor from a vain belief that it possesses any merits sufficient to entitle it to a publication; but only because it is an *Half-Century* Sermon; and because, as such, it may be regarded as a *Legacy* (though a trifling one) to the author's Parishioners and Friends.

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SERMON.

"I HAVE BEEN YOUNG, AND NOW AM OLD." — Psalm xxxvii. 25.

On the 20th of the present month occurred the seventy-seventh anniversary of my birth; and just fifty years ago this day was I, agreeably to the usages that have prevailed almost universally in the churches of the Congregational order in New England, set apart and consecrated to the work of the ministry in this place, — a work of deep import, on which I entered with much fear and trembling for its results, — and received a solemn charge to fulfil it amid many discouragements, perplexing cares, and trials. The present occasion is one of very rare occurrence. Compared with the multitude of laborers in the vineyard of the Master, few have been the instances recorded in which any of those who received ordination a hundred or seventy-five years since, or at later dates, lived and labored in one and the same field, or retained their pastoral connection with one and the same individual church, for the length of time in which I have dwelt "among my

own people." Of the three hundred, the supposed and probable number of settled Congregational clergymen on the stage, within the limits of Massachusetts, at the time of my ordination, only eleven instances of the kind are known *now* to exist. How much rarer a thing do you, my hearers, who witness in the religious community a spirit of uneasiness, craving for novelty, and love of change, — how much rarer a thing, should it happen at all, do you suppose, I ask, such an occurrence will become during the period embraced between the present and the year 1900? Unless preachers and hearers alter their ideas and notions as to their relations, their views and opinions as to the influence and good practical effects of a permanent ministry, compared with those of an occasional, changing, transient ministry, — unless there be a change of opinion and sentiment in this respect, let me repeat, it may be doubted, as regards those who receive their pastorates now, or who were endowed with them ten, fifteen, or twenty years since, whether there will be a single event of the kind to be placed on record during the period I have named. This remark you may think, perhaps, uncalled for and aside from this occasion. You will not, however, deem inappropriate to the hour a repetition of the words of the royal Psalmist, "I have been young, and now am old," uttered by him towards the close of life; words which changes in my physical constitution, the in-

firmities coming upon me, and the inability to perform for several years the work and duties of my office with constancy and without interruption, compel me forcibly to adopt. Yet for me, to whom the recollections of my childhood and youth, and the days of my early activity and strength, have been familiar, and even now are called up afresh, it is difficult, and almost impossible, to realize the fact, that so many have been the days and years of my earthly pilgrimage, and of my continuance in this sacred office; and that, should life be spared, when a few more brief years shall have passed, I shall be what a few only are permitted to become in age, an octogenarian. When I look at once and directly over the space intervening between this and the time of my ordination, it appears not very widely extended; but when I look back on the many parts, and contemplate the events that marked the separate — say the *decennial* — periods of my connection with you, and unite them together in order, I find they form a lengthy chain, reaching from early manhood to the verge of human life.

Were there nothing else to tell me, and to compel from my mouth the acknowledgment, that whereas I was once "young, I now am old," — surely the changes, wrought by the lapse of fifty years, in the ministry and the history of the neighboring churches and in other places, — changes too in our own church and congregation, — are enough to do

this. When I look around and ask concerning my fathers and brethren from this vicinity, and from other parts, who were present, composing the council, and took parts in the services at my ordination,* I perceive that not one of them remains; that they have all, from the oldest, the Rev. Dr. Cushing of Waltham, down to the youngest, the late Dr. Thompson of Barre (who, though a little more than three years before me in the ministry, was yet a little behind me in age), — all have finished their work on earth and gone to their rewards, — to *those rewards*, I trust, so bounteously promised by the Lord of life to the approved and accepted. When, too, I ask concerning the fathers, regarded once as pillars of this church, whether in office or out of office, and the mothers, too, whose influence has reached to the present generation, and is still seen in the love of Christian worship and order, and the warm attachment to Christian ordinances, that prevailed among us, — when I ask concerning those fathers and mothers in Israel, where are they? They who, at the time referred to, bowed, with their whitened locks, so reverently in our acts of devotion and communion, and looked up so meekly to receive the words of life from their seats in the old and first-built house of worship in the town, and, at later periods, in the one we now occupy (and I

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* See Note I., Appendix.

hope shall continue to honor),—when the inquiry is thus made, the response comes to me, "They too have done with all below." I find that, of all the then members of the church who took their places at the table of commemoration, but one individual lives and retains a connection with us.* I find that not even *one* of those male church-members who were active and took part in the call and settlement of the new minister, is now remaining among the living. I find further, that six deacons have deceased since my ordination, who were honored in their office, and whose memories will be cherished with respect;† and that there are now remaining with us two successors of those in office at the time of my settlement, whose heads are even now silvered over by age, though elected in the full strength and activity of early manhood.‡ When I look around, in vain do I search for *many* of those members of the parish who were voters and active in the transactions that led to my settlement among them as their minister. But a *solitary few* of them are *now* here and there to be found. And of the many who had just arrived, or who were arriving, at their majority and beginning to exercise their right of suffrage at town meetings, those who survive at

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* Mrs. Hannah Haild, in the ninety-first year of her age.

† Phinehas Byam, Josiah Wilder, Paul Kendall, Jonathan Cutting, Thomas Fisher, Esq., and Leonard Stone, Esq.

‡ Ezekiel Partridge and Jeremiah Lord.

present have become the *elders* in our midst. Backward I look, and perceive that one and *another* generation have passed on, and have been followed by new ones; these too are hastening onward, that others may come and have room to stand on God's earth. Again, I look around and observe that the children of many heads of families, at whose union in the endearing bonds of marriage I early officiated, and even their children's children, have arisen and are still rising up among us.

Now in the retrospect, in the many great changes and events that have transpired, in the passing away and disappearance of the old and the introduction of new scenes and objects, is there not afforded evidence that cannot be disputed, ay, conviction which cannot be resisted, that I have lived long on the earth, that whereas "I have been young, so I now am old" indeed?

A review of the past presents many reminiscences both sad and joyous. While it awakens the remembrance of humbling, sorrowful changes in my own person, in my domestic, social relations, in the circle of home endearments, in addition to those already noted in reference to this church and society, it does, at the same time, remind me of the many causes I have, and the no less obligations I ought to feel, of devout gratitude and thanksgiving to Him who has hitherto and thus far sustained and helped me.

It has been my lot to live and labor in a most renowned period of the world's history and of the progress of science, art, and civilization. In centuries back, events had occurred and been recorded which demanded and received, though not in due measure, the admiration and gratitude of mankind. There was the discovery of this Western Continent, a portion of the earth which, by its natural position, many advantages, and promises of wealth, attracted strongly the attention of adventurers and others, and, considering the then condition of the Old World, was suited to become an asylum and home for free-minded, enterprising men, and invited and led vast multitudes from different quarters to its exploration and settlement. There was, too, the invention of the mariner's compass, which was of immense use, and afforded at once vast facilities to navigation and commerce, and greater security to the lives and property floating, 'mid storms and tempests, on the mighty deep. With that and his chart, the navigator now apprehends and encounters fewer and less imminent dangers and disasters from the shoals and rocks that exist about and near to the shores. Again, there was the art of printing, superseding the tedious and almost endless work of transcribing, by the hand and pen, the manuscripts of the learned, the use and benefit of which but few, owing to the great expense of such a process, had the means to purchase and to own. By the aid of this invention,

now greatly improved and perfected, the writings of men can now be readily and universally circulated among those who have a desire and a taste for reading. Nay, the thoughts and the knowledge of the most gifted and learned minds may be communicated to thousands and millions of other minds, and become the property of the wealthy not only, but, at a comparatively small expense, the common inheritance of all classes in the community.

Yet, notwithstanding the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of the Christian era were honored by the discoveries and inventions of which I have spoken, and which have been of so great service to mankind; I think you will justify and sustain me in the assertion, that the past portion of this present nineteenth century has been a more marked period, ay, a memorable epoch in the world's history, in the annals of our country. Has it not been a wonder-working period? to say nothing of the discovery of the golden mines in our newly acquired territory, California, now admitted into our Union as one of the States, has it not been a period which, for the number of its grand discoveries and improvements in science and art, its many useful works and achievements of inventive genius, stands unparalleled by any other of the same length that can be found on historical record? Witness the many time and labor saving inventions and contrivances in machinery that have been so highly beneficial to the inter-

ests of the mechanic, the manufacturer, the agriculturist, and to the community. Witness too that remarkable discovery and application of principles, by which exact and perfect pictures of "the human face divine," of the family group and larger assemblies, of enchanting landscapes, and objects of interest, grandeur, and beauty in natural scenery or architecture, may now, by a short process, and in a few brief moments of time, be presented to the eye, which it would have required days, weeks, months, and sometimes years, for the painter to transfer and represent on canvas. Look also at the discovery and application of steam power to mechanical and manufacturing operations, and to the purposes of navigation and travel; which has led to the establishment of railroads, here and in foreign parts, over plains and through deserts and mountain passes; and of lines of steamers all along our extensive coasts, on our lakes and our many broad and navigable rivers, and even across the wide Atlantic; by which immense burdens of merchandise and vast multitudes of human beings, in a way much less tardy, and yet not less safe, than the old mode, are propelled and transported from almost every point, and from one extremity of the continent to another, and from this to other nations. Now these newly introduced facilities for business communication and intercommunication are sufficient, one might suppose, to satisfy the hasty, impatient propensities of a Yankee people.

Once more, to show how the last half-century has been a wonder-working age, unparalleled in history, let me direct your attention to that later and most surprising discovery and contrivance by our countryman, Morse, in the transmission of intelligence, the electric telegraph. By this, friends and others, remotely separated, are able to begin and carry on conversation, send messages of business, friendship, or love to each other, and after the lapse of some five, ten, twenty, or thirty minutes, receive a reply, yea, though it come from a region hundreds and thousands of miles off. Some sixty or seventy years ago, and even at a later date, it required many days, a week, sometimes a fortnight, for intelligence from Washington, Philadelphia, and even New York, to arrive at Boston, and among our villages and towns, by stages and post-riders, with their utmost diligence and careful speed. Now it is not necessary, in order to receive important items of information, that "one post shall run to meet another, and one messenger shall run to meet another," as it was in the days of the king of Babylon, to tell him of the capture and desolation of his proud city; for by means of this wonderful invention the news of any political movement or event of high importance; the news of an extensive, devastating conflagration, of the great loss of life and property in any of our harbors and ports, on the land, on our lakes, or great Western rivers; the news of some great, unwonted

destitution and suffering; or the news of so many villanous frauds, defalcations, robberies, and murders, — flies with lightning speed to every quarter of the country. And this it does in aid of the injured, and sometimes, thank Heaven! to the annoyance and disappointment of rogues, fugitives from justice, whom it helps to intercept and arrest in their flight, and bring back to trial and punishment, agreeably to the laws, and by the judicial tribunals and executive power of the States.

But while the period referred to has been thus eminently distinguished, it is to be regretted deeply that, so far as myself and the history of this town and church are concerned, it has presented no prominent records of my improvements in theological knowledge and fitting qualifications for the position I have occupied; that, in this respect, progress, on my part, has formed and claimed no parallel with that of science and art. Though I dare not, will not be so ungrateful to Him who giveth the increase, as to say that my planting and watering have been in vain, and my time and strength expended for naught, yet it is to be lamented that I have presented no greater gains, as an occupier of the Lord's talents, so few and no more valuable fruits, as a cultivator in the vineyard of the husbandman. Yes, while the past half-century has been marked by events of vast importance to this country and to the world, I feel it to be a subject of regret, that its his-

tory, in reference to this field of my labors, has not been filled with more and higher marks, worthier illustrations and monuments of the good influence and power of my ministry.

What that ministry has been, and what my doctrine and manner of life, many of you have known, and still may remember. But the manner of my first entering in among you, and the circumstances attending my settlement in the place, are within the recollection of but few, and those among the older of the present inhabitants.

After the decease of my predecessor in office,* which took place November, 1805, the pulpit had been supplied for a number of Sundays, as was the custom in those times, by the pastors of the neighboring churches, afterwards in part by hired preachers, then out of the regular ministry, and partly by young men, candidates for the office, — until the following August, when I came here in that capacity, as I supposed, and completed the term of my first engagement. I was then under an engagement to another destitute society; † that fulfilled, I returned by request and preached here a few more Sundays; and was then invited to a permanent settlement by both the church and parish, with but one dissenting voice, two or three remaining silent on the question. On my induction to office, the earliest opportunity

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* Rev. Ebenezer Sparhawk.

† At Haverhill, Mass.

was taken to deliver more than one discourse on the relation between pastor and people, and to contemplate and enforce the obligations and duties involved in that relation. How well and truly the vows and promises then solemnly made, or fully implied and understood, have been fulfilled, it may not be necessary here to inquire and decide. Allow me to say in this connection, however, that at the expiration of twenty years from that period, though I had yearly made some allusion to my ordination in speaking of past and passing events, I then, i. e. February, 1827, took a review of the past, and gave a more *particular and full* account of my stewardship.

I said then, and I now say again, that with regard to the doctrines you have heard, they were meant to be drawn from the sacred Scriptures, and not from the systems of fallible men. These Scriptures have been set forth as the only true standard of faith and practice. By these you have been required to try the doctrines you have heard; and these have been recommended to your study and examination with the privilege of drawing your own conclusions. "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." Men may differ, and they have differed, as to the meaning of Scripture, or *some parts* of the Divine counsel; but what has been conceived to be plainly revealed has not been withholden, nor anything kept back which has been viewed as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, correction, and instruction in right-

eousness." It is well known, that, as there is a great variety of views and opinions in respect to religious doctrines, so there is, of course, a great difference of opinion as to the proper *subjects* and *mode* of preaching. But I feel persuaded — and may I not appeal to every man's conscience, in the sight of God, when I make the assertion? — that those truths, those instructions, have been delivered to you, which, faithfully applied, are able to save the soul, and make men wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Regarding religion as consisting not in speculation merely, but in a holy temper and conduct, the preaching has dwelt more on those doctrines which are acknowledged to have the best practical tendency, and are the most suited to secure the end and spirit of religion, love to God and man, right disposition of heart, and a good and upright course of life. I have not aimed to lead you into the barren and unpleasant fields of controversy; for though this may sometimes excite a spirit of inquiry, and thus be the means of greater Biblical knowledge, still it too often excites a feeling of hostility, engenders strife, and extinguishes that charity, candor, which should mark the disciples of Christ and accompany their researches after truth. Leaving all metaphysical discussions as to the mode of the Divine existence, the precise nature of the Son of God, and the rank he sustains in the vast universe, it has been deemed and felt by me to be a duty to urge the

doctrine of the Apostle, that "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him." Instructed by our Saviour, that "it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent," it has been my earnest endeavor and desire to hold forth the *paternal* character and government of God, his law with all its obligations and sanctions, his boundless love, his purposes and dispensations of mercy; to represent to you the Divine mission and authority of Christ, the objects of his mission, his lovely and exalted character, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person"; also the offices he sustains, the works he performs, as the one only mediator between God and man. He has been preached as altogether qualified and sufficient to accomplish the end of his mission, the work of man's redemption, since "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Faith in him and submission to his authority have been insisted on as absolutely essential. And the faith that has been preached, and which, it is conceived, the Scriptures evidently require, is a belief in him as the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He has been held up as "the way, the truth, and the life"; and his death as the great event with which the salvation of men is connected;

and it accomplishes that only as it cleanses from all sin by the power it has to subdue and bring the sinner to repentance and reconcile him to God. I am not conscious that any doctrines, any views of religion, have been exhibited, tending to defeat the great ends of revelation, the practice of real godliness, or relaxing in the least the influence of the moral precepts of the Gospel, and causing men to think they might continue in sin and yet feel secure of abounding grace. Neither am I conscious of having exhibited the character of God and the conditions of his favor in such a light as to burden and torture the mind of the penitent sinner with despair, to discourage his repentance, his humble suit to a dishonored, and yet forbearing and merciful Father. I have not wished to close the gates of heaven against any humble, earnest seeker, whatever may have been his character or religious persuasion; and yet repentance and a return to holiness have been urged on each and on all as a necessary qualification and condition of an entrance.

It is natural that each and every person should be tenacious of his own religious opinions. I have my *own*, and humbly claim the *right to hold them.* They are dear to me, as they have been the result of personal investigation, and as they yield me consolation in this state of trial and probation; and I *do wish* that they might be more generally *extended and embraced.* But I am not conscious of any want

of Christian love and respect for those who believe differently, while they hold their faith in humility and charity, for they may have as legitimately arrived at their belief, and they may hold it as equally dear to themselves. Not conscious am I of a disposition to deny them the title and character of Christians; not conscious of a wish to withhold any privilege, any token of fellowship and regard, from any who bear the image of the Saviour. And concerning those who have wished to eat at the table of our Master, my inquiries have related to their Christian qualifications, their disposition and purpose to take the cross, to follow, imitate, and obey him, and not to the peculiarities of their doctrinal belief. Of *this I am conscious*, that I have taught and exhorted you to extend the feelings of love and the hand of charity to all, professing the name of Christ, of whatever denomination, who, by manifestation of his mind, his meekness, humility, and love, do declare that they belong to his fold. Conscious, too, am I, that I have testified to you, that scarcely anything is a greater evidence of the lack of vital religion, than the setting up of a claim that would shut out all others from your Christian affections, or from the Christian's hope. Though others, perhaps, may think they can justify such a spirit and such a claim, yet I should deem it inexcusable in *myself*, and feel that I should have a *tremendous account to give* for the assumption.

Such statements were made, such sentiments uttered, in 1827, not many years before that spirit of division, which had rent asunder many churches and societies once united and happy, began to do its work here, in the withdrawing from our church and society of a portion of its members, and forming themselves into a separate and distinct body.

In a sermon delivered in 1837, on the thirtieth anniversary of my ordination, reviewing the preceding decennial period of my pastoral service, and its attending circumstances and events, I took occasion to speak of the new society, and to dwell somewhat at length on the movement and alleged causes which led to its establishment. The withdrawal from us of a small portion of its members, and the diminution of our own number, you may well suppose, must have been a painful trial at the time, and no small annoyance to my peace, as I had not been *conscious* of conducting my ministrations in a manner to render them unworthy of further confidence. Not, however, denying the rights of the seceders, not questioning the integrity, the purity of their motives in separating from us, we allowed them to do it without hinderance and in peace. On that occasion, too, now twenty years ago, I said concerning them: "If they have been better edified, more exemplary and happy Christians, under a different administration, I rejoice in the measure, and therein will rejoice. My heart's desire and prayer

for them is, that they may be saved. The Lord only build them up in Christian faith, holiness, and love, and I will indulge in no feelings of hostility towards them on account of their religious creed."

And yet further, as your pastor had been charged with a change of religious views, with a departure from the truth, and an exhibition of doctrines they had not been accustomed to hear before, in the days especially of his predecessor, and that was alleged, by some at least of the withdrawing party, as the cause and reason by which they had been moved, I felt constrained, in justice to you and to myself, to say a word or two as to that and in replication. And a statement was made of the religious opinions and views with which I first came among you, and which, with only some slight modifications perhaps, had been uniformly adhered to until that time. A confident appeal was made to you, whether the great leading principles, which had been the foundation, and which were still the basis, of that instruction you had received and were still receiving, were not the same as were delivered unto you from the beginning. Yes, the appeal was made to those whose recollection then extended back to my first entering among you, and to later periods most certainly, whether I did not then preach, or had since ever ceased to preach, concerning Christ, that he is the only mediator between God and man, the Saviour of sinners; whether I did not then preach, and had

not since preached, faith in his divine mission, reliance on him, and obedience to his authority in the offices he sustains, as the essential, the only qualification of a Christian? So that it remained a question, at least, whether the departure from the doctrines formerly received and held in this place, or the change of faith, which led to the recent measure of separation, had been on the part of the *pastor*, or on the part of the movers of that measure.

In that sermon, too, it was attempted to pay a just tribute to the memory of the incumbent's predecessor in office, to his firmness and fidelity of purpose, and to the liberality of his spirit, feelings, and course of action; and to correct some statements that had been got up in regard to the character of his opinions and preaching. It was distinctly stated, that though he accepted the doctrine of the Trinity, as it had been held by the majority of Christians, but had not been so fully discussed as in later years, yet from what I had seen from one of his printed discourses and from his unpublished manuscripts, and had been told of his preaching, I was led to the conclusion, that he dwelt more on the mediatorial character and offices of Christ "as a prophet, priest, and king," than on his metaphysical nature, and supreme, underived divinity. Had he lived, what course he would have taken in reference to the divisions that had arisen since, we knew not, nor was it for us to decide. That would have depended on the

amount of importance he would have attached to the belief and reception of the disputed doctrine, as indispensable, in itself, to the character of a Christian, to Christian fellowship, and to salvation. But we have the fairest grounds, and evidences of the greatest weight for believing, that, had some scenes and transactions that have transpired since his day been witnessed then, the spirit and measures of the actors in them would have received no countenance from him, but met rather with a stern rebuke. This was said not unadvisedly, but on authority wholly reliable.*

It was stated too, that, from the circumstance that he believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, it was by no means to be inferred that he was a Calvinist. Such an inference would be illegitimate and groundless; for a belief in the doctrine of three coequal persons in the Godhead is not confined to Calvinists, but is held by them in common with many of other sects, Arminians, Baptists, some of the Universalists (if I am not mistaken), the Methodists, and the members of the Roman Catholic communion. That he was a Calvinist in faith, and a preacher of Calvinism proper, there was no evidence, not even the slightest, which I had been able to collect from facts and from information, derived from those, both among the clergy and laity, who knew him, and were intimately acquainted with his manner of preaching and doctrine; but *much*, *very much* to the contrary.†

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* See Note II., Appendix.

† See Note III., Appendix.

At the termination of the thirty years of my ministry I felt a hesitancy, and had a painful struggle in deciding the question, which arose in my mind, whether, on account of feeble health and other considerations, to propose a separation and resign my office, or to continue my connection, and still labor with you as I might be able. After much thought and deliberation, the decision was on the latter alternative, and it was arrived at with the resolve to follow that order of things which God in his providence might point out for us in time to come. Of that I was made glad. In adopting the course I did, I became afterwards convinced that I did not act adversely either to your interests or to my own; for, during the ten following years, I was able, for a considerable portion of the time, to perform the required duties of my station. And (you will not, I trust, charge me with any want of humility) I express the belief now, the hope at least, that my labors were not wholly unavailing; that I was of some use to individuals and families in my visits to the abodes of religious anxiety, sickness, and sorrow, and to the society in addressing to you words of counsel and encouragement, of promise and hope, in a period of perplexity, darkness, and doubt. I rejoice in the belief, and I thank God for it, that the course of events was so ordered, in wisdom and mercy, as to result in your good, in the establishment of your faith and principles, in more enlight-

ened views of truth, duty, and obligation, in the adoption of higher aims, higher hopes.

The close of those ten years brought us to the fortieth anniversary of our union as pastor and people, when again we were led to remember and consider days and years gone by. On that occasion, I adverted to then recent transactions, to that event which had introduced a new laborer* into this portion of the Lord's vineyard, and associated him with an old servant in its care and improvement. And while I congratulated you and myself on the event, which brought you and him together in the bonds of a sacred relation, I dwelt, somewhat at length, on the duties and obligations involved in that relation, and urged the fulfilment of them, on your part, in all earnestness and fidelity.

Then I certainly did not predict, neither did I expect to accomplish, another decennial term of my pastoral relation. Yet so it is, I appear before you again, and on the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination. Of the interval between that and the present occasion there is but little account to be given. My public labors have been "few and far between." In the absence of my colleague, and at other times, I have preached on two of our annual Thanksgiving days, on fifteen, or more, whole Sundays, and occasionally on several half-days. Besides that, I have only aided him in our communion services, and on

* Rev. Edwin G. Adams.

some funeral occasions. And thus has ended the work of half a century. God pardon its errors, its many defects!

During the whole time of this ministry the baptisms in the parish, administered by myself, or others in my stead, and by my colleagues, have been 517; the admissions to church communion, 274; all, with the exception of 28 only, by profession; the greatest number in any one year, since the church's organization, namely, 28, three on letters of recommendation from other churches, and twenty-five by profession, was recorded in the year 1811, the fourth year of my administration. The ordinations and installations of pastors over other churches, in which I have assisted, or in which *you*, rather, have assisted by your pastors and delegates, have been 44; the dedications of houses of worship in which I have taken a part, including the one in which we are now assembled, have been 4; the marriages I have solemnized, 351; and the records of mortality show the number of deaths in the parish and town to have been 1264, nearly 60 more than the whole number of the inhabitants fifty years ago. Of this number, 1264, so far as I have been able to ascertain, — setting aside some transient persons and those whose ages were not made known, — 483 died between the time of birth and the age of 15 years; 180 between the ages of 15 and 30 years; 184 between the ages of 30 and 50 years; 178 between the ages of 50 and 70

years; 109 between 70 and 80 years; 73 between 80 and 90 years; and 27 between 90 and 100 years, some of whom had arrived nearly at the latter period. Now adding together the number of those who died between the time of birth and the age of 15 years, and the number of those who died between the ages of 15 and 30 years, we find the amount to exceed, by 31, half of the whole number of those who have died during the fifty years. This fact, in whatever light you may regard it, and whatever be the impressions it may produce on your minds, ought to be wisely and profitably improved by all; for it certainly reminds and admonishes parents, that those fond hopes that rest on their children are liable to be cut short. It teaches the young, children even, not to presume on life, not to rejoice *too confidently* in their present pleasing prospects; but be mindful of their dependence on, and of their obligations and duty to, their all-worthy and kind Creator; to remember him in the pleasant and happy morn of life, and to *think*, and *purpose*, and *act*, with a wise and cheerful reference to his will and approbation.

During the time I have been with you, my heart has been in the cause of common-school education and the progress of the young in that knowledge and virtue, so essential to their usefulness and respectability in life. And for the greater portion of it, and until laws were enacted by our Legislature requiring towns to appoint school committees for

the purpose, and to *pay* them for their services, the care of your schools, and the examination and licensing of teachers, devolved *principally* and almost *wholly* on myself, assisted by the selectmen of the town at the closing examinations of the winter schools only. At the period referred to, it was considered an honor, and it was certainly the ambition of some, to *board the master;* and though the person boarding him received but a small compensation, say $1.25, and sometimes only $1.00 or less, per week, it was customary for him, on examination days, to treat the selectmen, the minister, and other invited guests to a feast of fat things, not to say, in these days of improvement and temperance, to a little of the exhilarating cup.

Nor have I felt less interest in the cause and advancement of church music among you, which has generally been in a condition honorable to both the society and the choir. As I have regarded this as an important part of our temple service, and my heart has beat in response to its soothing, enchanting strains, I have not been backward to aid in its support, by recommending parish grants of money, and sometimes by contributing a little from my private funds, towards the establishment and maintenance of singing-schools and the provision of competent, able teachers; also by causing to be printed, for the use of the choir and the congregation, a small selection of hymns, partly in metres in which none of Dr.

Watts' were written, and yet in which many of the most approved, soul-stirring, and elevating tunes in church music are composed; and at length by the recommendation and introduction of a larger collection,* which is still in use among us in our acts of grateful homage.

For a considerable portion of the time during my connection with you, the stipend I received, $500, was found, in the practice of strict economy, and with the charities bestowed, sufficient for my support, and the support of my family. I aimed at no extravagance of style in living or dress. If I had any ambition at all in this respect, it was this, and merely this, that my people might not be *ashamed* of their minister. Yet there were years when, owing to unusual high prices of labor, of articles of clothing, and provisions, occasioned by restrictions on our commerce, by the war of 1812, and seasons of scarcity, added to the increase of a rising family, I felt some, and dreaded more, pecuniary embarrassments; and my annual expenditures exceeded, by one hundred dollars, and sometimes two, the amount of my salary. But thanks to the merciful arrangements of God's providence, through the timely aid of kind friends, and the voluntary offerings of many among you, I was carried through such discouragements, and felt not the painful necessity of soliciting an addition to my stipulated support.

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* Dr. Greenwood's.

Perceiving the truth and justice of the Saviour's remark, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," — freely have you ministered unto me of your substance. Rightly interpreting, perceiving the true import, you have felt too the weight, and have been prompted to a ready *fulfilment*, of the apostolic injunction, — "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things." I say rightly understanding the *true* import of this direction, — for it has been strangely perverted and made to convey a meaning wholly different from what Paul intended. I have known a man, who, discarding from his creed and rules of action that cardinal virtue, "which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly," explained the direction in question as giving him authority, and making it his duty, to instruct and enlighten his spiritual guides, point out to them their supposed errors, and *communicate* to them his own wisdom and understanding, and urge on them his own peculiar (Antinomian) dogmas. On a certain occasion, a clerical gentleman, knowing well the character of the man, his love of notoriety, and his forwardness to show himself to be something, asked him what authority, what commission, he had to act the part he had assumed? Why, said he, we read in one of Paul's epistles, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things." The quick and ready

rejoinder was, "Then do you go home and send your minister a good fat turkey." Now to this comment on Paul's direction, it may well be supposed that we, the ministers of parishes, never will make, as we never have made, any, even the least objection. Yet while the interpretation is one of easy acceptance on *my* part, so it has, without controversy, and with equal readiness, found favor, and met with a hearty approval, on *your* part; and I can bear witness that, in the mode of communication *indicated*, you have abounded in all kindness; and I thank you. And as you do not come behind in other things, so I hope you will *continue* to "abound in this grace also," and that you will yet, and ever, show to the ministry and before the churches such tangible, such pleasant to the taste "proofs of your love," in addition to your pious prayers, your many expressions of true Christian sympathy, so satisfying, soothing, to the *soul's* longings.

And now, brethren and friends, let your light shine, and come behind in no good thing, that your fellow-disciples, near or remote, may receive welcome tidings of you, and be with you in spirit, "joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

My friends, let your co-operation come in aid of philanthropists, lovers of humanity and of our race, in all those measures of benevolent action that may approve themselves to your minds as wise and practicable, and having the good of others in view, the extension of Christ's kingdom and cause; that enterprise, especially, which has arrested and which is still arresting the attention, and drawing toward it the affections, of Christians of our own denomination; and do not leave a confessedly good cause to take care of itself. It is for you to do something to diffuse abroad the spirit and power of true faith, light, and life, *especially* where the evils of spiritual destitution are known to exist, where *many* are in want of Christian privileges and means, — a want scarcely felt in our New England. If Christianity, its principles, precepts, and spirit, have power to prevent, counteract, or remove causes of poverty, moral desolation, and crime, you will, as lovers, friends of your country, be disposed to give them your *prayers*, your wide *sympathies*, at least, if not adequate relief to their wants. If, to the extent of your ability, you help to erect the Gospel standard among them, you will acquire something of the character of Christ and his Apostles; and many, *some*, it may be, who have gone out from among *you*, will gather round that standard, in gratitude to you, their benefactors, and hail it as a fair, a sure omen of a better, happier, safer condition.

Again, would you do something in advancement of commendable enterprises, remember to encourage, foster, and aid the plans, the interests, of your "Ladies' Social Circle," and help them to attain the many worthy objects of their association. Neglect not the cause of Sunday-school instruction among you. For thirty years now has this institution, the Sabbath school, been in existence here, and, in my view, it is to be regarded not only as producing good moral results in its immediate vicinity, but as having a wide and far-reaching influence. Every emigrant to regions of the Far West, who has had his training in the Sunday school, and who carries with him its influences, may be, and should be, regarded as an efficient missionary, or an aid to the cause. Where your children, now on the stage, and those who shall yet come upon the stage, will scatter themselves in and through the land, neither you nor I may foresee. Yet wherever they shall go, and in whatever classes of society they shall mingle, be it your desire, labor, and prayer, that they carry with them the principles, habits, influences, and power for good, which it is the object of the Sunday school to impart. With a fostering care I have looked to its interests and labored in its cause. While I still hold it in affectionate remembrance, and commend it to the ever-watchful and guiding care of Almighty God, and to the ever-enduring sympathies of Him who careth for the lambs wandering from or gathered into his fold,

I leave it, as I have left it in some measure already, in your hands, to be guided by the wisdom and blessed by the counsels of my colleague and successor, and the patronage of the faithful and true. God bless it! God bless abundantly its patrons and friends, its superintendents, its teachers, its pupils! God bless them all!

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

NOTE I. — Page 6.

The Council at the ordination, convened on the evening of the preceding day at the house of Deacon Paul Kendall, was composed of the following pastors of churches and their delegates, viz. : Rev. Dr. Cushing of Waltham, who was the moderator and preached the sermon ; Rev. Dr. Kendall of Weston, who made the consecrating prayer ; Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dr.) John Foster of Brighton, who offered the introductory prayer ; Rev. Joseph Lee of Royalston, who gave the charge ; Rev. Joseph Estabrook of Athol, who presented the right hand of fellowship ; Rev. Jonathan Osgood of Gardner, who made the concluding prayer ; Rev. Ezekiel Bascom of Gerry (afterwards Phillipston) ; Rev. Festus Foster of Petersham, who was scribe of the Council ; and Rev. (afterwards Dr.) James Thompson of Barre.

The benediction was pronounced by the candidate ordained, after reading Dr. Watts' version of the one hundred and twenty-second Psalm, which was sung by the choir, commencing,

> "How pleased and blest was I
> To hear the people cry," &c.;

and the last two stanzas of which are the following : —

"May peace attend thy gate,
And joy within thee wait,
To bless the soul of every guest;
The man who seeks thy peace,
And wishes thine increase,
A thousand blessings on him rest.

"My tongue repeats her vows,
Peace to this sacred house!
For here my friends and kindred dwell;
And since my gracious God
Makes thee his blest abode,
My soul shall ever love thee well."

It may be said of the occasion, as it was said of the day of Rev. Dr. Lowell's ordination over the West Church in Boston, in an address of his on the fiftieth anniversary of that event, that "it was a day without a cloud." Besides having a bright and beautiful day for the occasion, all who were interested enough to attend had the privilege and enjoyment of as fine sleighing as could have been desired; the ground, during the preceding night, having been smoothly covered over with a sufficient, but no greater, depth of snow.

NOTE II. — Page 23.

THE author once had an interview with the late venerable Dr. Bancroft of Worcester; when, conversing on the subject of the past and present state of religion and religious feeling in the county, and of the deceased ministers of the Gospel, he spoke of the Rev. Mr. Sparhawk. "I suppose," said the Doctor, "he was a liberal man in his day." In confirmation of the remark, and in illustration of that liberality, he added,

"I perfectly recollect being called to join in an ecclesiastical council, of which Mr. Sparhawk was a member. It is well known that I was regarded, at the time, by most of the ministers in the county, as a heretic. A certain member of the council was overheard by me to say to Mr. Sparhawk, 'Brother Sparhawk, what shall we do with *Mr. Bancroft?* I cannot consent to sit in council with him, a man of such heretical views. If he is suffered by the council to retain his seat, I must withdraw.' 'Very well, then,' replied Mr. Sparhawk; 'you must take your course. But we did not come here to try, or catechise, and deal with Mr. Bancroft. Let him alone; he came here by invitation and authority, and has as good a right to his seat as we have to ours. Let us first do the business to which we have been called; and then, if you wish, you can catechise Mr. Bancroft as much as you please.' "

NOTE III. — Page 23.

THE statements which had been made by the author, in reference to his predecessor's doctrinal views and his character as a preacher, and to his candor and liberality of mind, spirit, and course of action, — and the many evidences adduced, from facts and anecdotes not a few, in confirmation of those statements, — are all written in the sermon referred to; and the author has from *that* made an extract, (in manuscript,) which he would wish may be preserved, that reference to it may be had by any who may have the curiosity to learn and know *more fully* what they were.